

## Letters

# Lithuanian Independence Deserves Recognition

To the Editor:

I disagree with "Cheer Lithuania, but Don't Meddle" (editorial, March 17), in which you support Bush Administration nonrecognition of Lithuania's declaration of independence.

As a Lithuanian-American, I am dismayed at the lackluster support offered to the recently re-established Republic of Lithuania.

The Lithuanian communities in the United States and other countries have worked tirelessly for almost 50 years to maintain their heritage and to keep the hope of an independent Lithuania alive. The United States had never recognized Lithuania's forced annexation, and in this we took great comfort. It clearly implied continued recognition of a distinct and autonomous Lithuania under Soviet military occupation. Why, then, must the United States be reluctant to reaffirm its position and offer the recognition of Lithuanian nationhood implicit since 1940? Why must the United States resort to vagueness and political word games? What is there to fear?

United States support for Lithu-

ania's cause was abundant when the possibility of a declaration of independence was remote. Now that it has occurred, the United States no longer seems comfortable with the pro-Lithuanian rhetoric it used for so long to stroke the hopes of voting-age Lithuanian-Americans.

Granted, Lithuania may not be so geopolitically or economically significant, but things such as gross national product, territory and borders should not be allowed to compromise the basic principle of self-determination widely espoused by the United States.

You suggest that recognition of Lithuania's independence "would give little practical benefit." Since when did the United States adopt a practicality test for determining whether or not to aid oppressed peoples? Of course, the Soviet Union is a formidable occupying force in Lithuania, but has not the United States always been a champion of democracy, regardless of the circumstances?

The United States spends billions of dollars every year supporting often ungrateful countries that seem to be

in pursuit of everything but peace and prosperity. Lithuania, on the other hand, with promise for economic viability, a demonstrated thirst for democracy and an interest in neutrality and good-faith dealings with all its neighbors, asks only that its declaration of independence, the culmination of the very hope that the United States has helped nurture, be recognized.

ARUNAS T. APANAVICIUS  
Bronx, March 17, 1990

## Support for Gorbachev

To the Editor:

You are right ("Cautious Courage About Lithuania," editorial, March 28) to defend President Bush's handling of the powderkeg in Lithuania. Mikhail S. Gorbachev is clearly giving the people of Lithuania the right to negotiate separation from the Soviet Union, which means he is only asking for time, during which details of a settlement can be arranged.

If President Gorbachev offered a binding plebiscite in Lithuania in three or four years, to resolve the issue of independence or federation, the political leaders of the West should urge the Lithuanian leaders to accept.

We have known for the last year that Mr. Gorbachev would eventually draw a line to slow the political disintegration of the East bloc, and we have been thrilled again and again as he has withheld military power to permit the democratization of Eastern Europe. We have to give him credit for that and at the same time give him a good measure of trust that he means what he says about working out a solution in the Baltic.

American conservatives who are unhappy with President Bush, preferring that he egg Lithuania's leaders into open confrontation with Moscow, are ignoring the tremendous investment the Western democracies have in Mikhail Gorbachev. We should hope he could be given a little breathing space to devote to economic and political reforms. It is not inconceivable that in three years he could have the Soviet economy and democratic institutions developing so rapidly that in a plebiscite, Lithuania would choose to remain part of this new world.

JUDE WANNISKI

Morristown, N.J., March 28, 1990

The writer, a political and economic consultant, publishes a newsletter.